

A N
ENQUIRY
How far the
COMMISSIONERS
OF HIS

Majesty's Land-Tax,
Have POWER to ALTER the *Quota's*
Assessed within the several *Hun-*
dreds or *Divisions*, throughout
GREAT BRITAIN;

Conformable to an ACT 4th of
K. *William* and Q. *Mary*,
FOR

Granting to Their Majesties an Aid of *Four*
Shillings in the Pound, for one Year, for
carrying on a Vigorous War against
France.

In a LETTER to the Right Honourable the
L**D C**P****R. *K*

Magna est Veritas & praevalabit.

By a COMMISSIONER of one of the *Ag-*
grieved Parishes in the CITY and LI-
BERTY of WESTMINSTER.

L O N D O N:

Printed for M. COOPER, at the *Globe* in *Pater-noster-*
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K. W. 1794 c. 22

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In a Letter to the Right Honourable the
Lord Chancellor.

By James O. Prevalent.

By a Commissioner of one of the reg-
istered Parishes in the City and Li-
berty of WESTMINSTER.

LONDON.

Printed for M. G. 1794.
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A N

ENQUIRY, &c.

MR LORD,

WHEN I gave my Voice for placing you in the Ch——r at our General Meeting, I little expected the Trouble of writing this Epistle. And, perhaps, if things had been suffer'd to go on in their old way, that is, if the Commissioners of the aggriev'd Parishes had sat down quietly under their Oppressions, and never strove to remove a Part of their intolerable Burden from them, it is certain, there would not have appeared, *prima facie*, any Grounds of Complaint. And even now, had your L——p put the last hand to our Proceedings, the whole Affair might

have subsided till the next Year called upon us to attend you in the same Capacity.

But as things are circumstanced, I shall ever despair of seeing you in the Ch——r again, or even at the Meeting. Your L——p, I dare say, has given over all Thoughts of meeting us again, or you would not have denied setting your Hand to the Minutes as Ch——n, when pressed to do it. This Refusal of yours, is ascribed to divers Causes; wherein *Self-Interest* is said to bear the first place. But, my Lord, I, who have been long acquainted with your L——p's Virtues, cannot attribute your Refusal to any Motive of *Self-Interest*. You have given so many Proofs of your Public Spirit, your Hospitality, your Affability, and the long Train of Christian Graces, which you inherit, as not to leave so much as a Doubt remaining, that you would prefer your own *private Interest* to the public Good. On the contrary, your L——p. was ever most inclinable to devote your Purse to the Service of the Public, by generously subscribing to the Loans that are annually opened for defraying the Expences of Government. And perhaps the Reduction of your Fortune may be owing to your too great Generosity in subscribing so largely, and at so critical a Conjunction, for Support

port of the Wars in which we are unhappily engaged. Your L—p's Refusal therefore cannot be placed to the Account of *Self-Interest*.

Others ascribe it to a want of Resolution; some to one thing, and some to another; but let what will be the Cause, it must center in this. That a Man, who wants Resolution, or who is fearful to put any Question of Consequence, under a Pretence that it may be illegal, or who leans too much towards his Friends on one side of the Ch—r, or who having done all, is so terrified at his own Proceedings, that he dreads to sign them; and yet is weak enough to give another leave to sign them for him, is to the full as unfit for a Ch—n, as a Man who openly declares, that *Self-Interest* is his governing Principle, and shall be the Standard of all his Actions.

I believe, your L—p is sufficiently convinced, that the Failings I have recounted, for I choose to call them by so soft a Name, are every one of them Disqualifications for a Ch—n. And therefore I shall not animadvert further upon them. But it may be proper to explain myself a little, as to my asserting it to be a Weakness in a Ch—n of any Meeting that concerns the Public,
after

after he has refused setting his Hand to the Minutes of the Day, to give leave to another to sign them for him. It is, my L—d, a manifest Weakness, because the Ch—n, by granting that Leave, testifies a sort of Approbation of those Proceedings, and acknowledges the Legality of them; for if he thought them entirely illegal; that the Questions were not equitable; and the Majority fraudulently obtain'd, it would, in such a case, be downright Ideotism for a Ch—n to sign the Minutes himself, or to transfer his Right of signing them to another.

Does not your L——p remember what befel Sir *John Eyles*, one of the *South-Sea* Directors, in 1720, who did the same thing you have now done; although your Case and his are not strictly parallel, because you refused signing to Proceedings that were legal; but the other refused it, because he was convinced they were illegal. Yet he thought by giving leave to another to sign them for him, he should slip his Neck out of the Collar, but was mistaken; for the House of C—ns would admit of no such Collusion. They saw thro' the Evasion, and thereupon ordered him to be brought to the Bar, and reprimanded by the Sp—k—r for his said Offence. I mention

mention this, not to add new Terrors to your L—p, but to convince you, that if any of the Proceedings were illegal, at the time you presided in the Ch—r, your appointing another to sign the Minutes of those Proceedings for you, cannot at all alleviate any Censure, which might, in such case, be put upon you.

Having clear'd up this Point, I shall next proceed to shew, that the Proceedings at our General Meetings were not only legal, but consonant to the Maxims of Justice and Equity. And herein I must beg leave to quote some Clauses in the Act passed this last Session, *for granting an Aid to his Majesty by a Land Tax, to be raised in Great Britain for the Service of the Year 1749.*

I choose to begin with *page 7*, wherein our Proportion is ascertained by the Act as follows, *viz.* ' For the City of *Westminster*, and Liberties thereof, and Offices executed in *Westminster-Hall*, the Sum of 63,092 *l. 1 s. 5 d.* Thus the City and Liberty of *Westminster*, including the Offices, is made one Division distinct from the County of *Middlesex*, and not a Sub-division, as some ridiculously imagine. For the next Paragraph assesses the County as follows,

follows, *viz.* ' For the rest of the County of *Middlesex*, the Sum of 107,602 *l.* 11 *s.* 7*d.* In like manner the Palaces of *Whitehall* and *St. James's* are assessed distinct, ' the Sum of 30,754 *l.* 6 *s.* 3*d.* The City of *London* has also a distinct Quota, and the several Inns of Court have separate Quota's to raise for the Service of his Majesty. I am the more particular, as we have several amongst us, who will neither give themselves the trouble to consider the Land Tax Act as they ought, nor will be convinced by those who have.

I think, it is on all hands admitted, that the Quota's affixed by the Act on the several Hundreds and Divisions, must absolutely be raised for the Service of his Majesty, and that the Commissioners have no Authority to alter those Quota's, nor can they be alter'd but by Consent of Parliament. And consequently the Sum of 63,092 *l.* 1 *s.* 5*d.* affixed on our Division, namely, for the City of *Westminster* and Liberties thereof, and Offices executed in *Westminster-Hall*, is the full Sum to be raised within the said City and Liberty, and which must be raised without Appeal. But, my L^d, you do not find any Sum affixed on the several Parishes in this Act. The Parliament have left that to be settled by the Com-

Commissioners, with as much *Equality* and *Indifference* as is possible, by a Pound-Rate. The Clause is as follows, *pag.* 13.

‘ And to the end the full and entire Sum
 ‘ by this Act charged upon the severall
 ‘ Counties, Cities, Boroughs, Towns and
 ‘ Places respectively of *England, Wales,*
 ‘ and *Berwick, as aforesaid,* may be fully
 ‘ and completely raised and paid to his
 ‘ Majesty’s Use ; be it further enacted by
 ‘ the Authority aforesaid, That all and
 ‘ every Manors, Messuages, Lands, &c. &c.
 ‘ shall be charged with as much *Equality*
 ‘ and *Indifference* as is possible, by a Pound-
 ‘ Rate, for or towards the said severall and
 ‘ respective Sums by this Act set or im-
 ‘ posed, or intended to be set or imposed,
 ‘ for and upon all and every such Coun-
 ‘ ties, Cities, Boroughs, Towns, or other
 ‘ Places *hereby charged therewith, as a-*
 ‘ *foresaid, &c.*’

Your L——p will observe the Words, *as aforesaid,* for they imply a Reference to the severall Sums contained in the first eleven Pages of the Act, and consequently cannot any ways affect the Sums settled on the Sub divisions, because the Sub divisions are settled by the Commissioners ; whereas the Hundreds and Divisions are settled by Parliament.

Page 31. of this Act appointed the Commissioners to meet on or before the 18th of April 1745, and afterwards in like manner, as often as it shall be necessary, for putting so much of this Act in Execution as is hereby committed to their Care and Charge; and the said Commissioners, or so many of them as shall be present at such general Meeting or Meetings, *or the major Part of them*, are hereby authorized and required to put so much, as aforesaid, of this present Act in Execution, and shall ascertain and set down in Writing the several Proportions, *which ought to be charged* upon every Hundred, Lathe, Wapentake, Rape, Ward, or other Division respectively within *England, Wales, and Berwick upon Tweed*, for and towards the raising and making up the whole Sum *before* by this Act charged upon the whole County, City, &c. by charging in proportion to the Sums which were assessed on the same Hundreds or Divisions respectively, by Act of Parliament made and passed in the 4th of King *William* and Queen *Mary*, &c. And shall also, if they see Cause, subdivide, and distribute themselves, and the other Commissioners not then present into less Numbers, &c. as may best conduce

conduce to the carrying on his Majesty's Services hereby required, &c.

Now, my Lord, by the above Clause, it is apparent, that the Commissioners are not tied down to one General Meeting for each Hundred or Division, but that they are impowered to meet afterwards in like manner, as often as it shall be necessary for putting the Act in Execution. Nor is the manner of their Proceedings pointed out otherwise, than by directing the Commissioners at such General Meetings to ascertain and set down in Writing the several Proportions which ought to be charged upon every Hundred, &c. for and towards the raising and making up the whole Sum before charged upon the whole County, City, &c. meaning for the City and Liberty of Westminster and Offices, the Sum assessed upon that Division in pag. 7. of this Act. Whereby the Intention of the Legislature is plain, that provided the Sum of 63,092 l. 15. 5d. be raised in that Division, and paid, as directed by the Act, to his Majesty's Receiver-General, the Commons of Great Britain, by whose Authority, this Tax is annually levied, will not inquire in what manner it be raised, unless a Complaint came regularly before that Honourable House, that the Sum was raised in

very unequal Proportions, whereby great Numbers of his Majesty's Subjects were grievously oppressed, whilst the Load sat so lightly upon the Shoulders of others, that they could scarcely feel it. The former, my L—d, was our Case, and therefore we resolved to ease ourselves of this Oppression, by laying Part of our heavy Burthens upon two Parishes; which, from barren Fields and unoccupied Lands, are now become more opulent than any two Parishes in the Kingdom of *Great Britain*. We thereupon consulted the Act more narrowly than heretofore, and found the Remedy in our own Hands. We saw the Intention of the Legislature was, that we were to *ascertain and set down in Writing the several Proportions which ought to be charged; and that this was to be done with as much Equality and Indifference as possible, by a Pound-Rate.*

I know your L——p to be very diffident in construing Acts of Parliament; you have more than once declared, that as you had not been brought up to the Law, you were very scrupulous in giving your Opinion. I could make the same Plea as your L——p, that I was never brought up to the Law. Yet will be bold to say, that as I am (thank God) endued with a moderate
Share

Share of Common Sense; I think I am capable of interpreting an *English* Act of Parliament when I read it, especially a *Land-Tax Act*, which is so full of Equity, that *equal, just* and *reasonable Proportions*, are in a manner echoed throughout the Act, and the whole adapted to the meanest Capacity.

An Act of so general a Concern as this, wherein many Thousands of Persons are empower'd annually to carry it into Execution, cannot be supposed to be so full of Ambiguity, as to require Gentlemen to run to Lawyers at every turn, in order to get it explained. I fear, if this was to be the Case, the raising of Supplies by this Act, would be greatly retarded, perhaps to the prejudice of the common Cause.

We therefore, my L—d, thought proper to rely upon our own Judgments. It was represented to your L——p, that one Parish in particular (the oldest in the Liberty) annually raised 4*s.* in the Pound, besides a Re-assessment of 12 *d.* in the Pound, and had done so for four or five Years past, and yet is Two Thousand Five Hundred Pounds in Debt; which was likely to have continued in that State for several Years to come, without an Easement from other Parishes, that could
better

better afford to bear the Burthen. This your L——p seemed astonish'd at, yet you generously bestowed your *annual Pity* upon that Parish, and would (according to custom) have persuaded the Commissioners who insisted upon being eas'd, that it was out of the power of a General Meeting to make any Alteration in the Quota's.

Luckily for them, the Commissioners of three other Parishes, who found themselves aggrieved likewise, thought this a proper Opportunity to redress themselves and their Neighbours, and to lay a Part of the Burden upon those opulent Parishes, which from becoming opulent, by having Men of Fortune reside in them, used to lord it over the rest of their Neighbours.

I shall pass over the little Artifices made use of by several Great Men, to prevent our coming at the Proportions assell'd in each Parish, such as denying the rest of the Commissioners the Sight of their Books, and the Evidence of their Clerks under frivolous Pretences, while those of the oppressed Parishes were ready to be *examined on Oath*. Yet I cannot pass over in silence the honest Declaration of those Gentlemen at the same time, *that we had Justice on our side, and ought to be relieved*; but this was

was accompanied with a Pretence, *That the Act gave us no power to alter the Quota's, &c.* Surely, my L—d, if we have Justice on our side, we have the Law on our side. But if Law and Justice are diametrically opposite, as those worthy Gentlemen seem to insinuate in the Case under our Consideration, I should be glad to be informed, upon what Principles are our Laws founded? Are they not founded upon the Principles of Justice and Equity? Every reasonable Man will conclude they are. For when any Law deviates from Justice, it ceases to be a Law, and becomes an Act of Oppression, and as such ought to be repealed. Yet, can any Man say this is the Case of the Act now before us? Does not almost every Page repeat the *Equality* with which this Tax ought to be rais'd? Is it not therefore highly preposterous for Commissioners, because they are more wealthy than their oppressed Brethren, to insist that the Law is against them, and yet to allow the Justice of their Cause in the very same Breath?

By diligent Enquiry amongst those Commissioners who had Estates in the several Parishes within the Liberry, and *Honesty* enough to declare the Proportions each of them paid, altho' such Discovery will, in all proba-

probability, affect some of their Estates, we found, That one Parish paid to the Land-Tax at a Rack-Rent 4*s.* in the Pound and a Debt of 2500*l.* incurred besides; another Parish paid 3*s.* 8*d.* in the Pound; a third 3*s.* 6*d.* a fourth 3*s.* 4*d.* a fifth 2*s.* 8*d.* whilst the other two improved Parishes paid at the rate of 1*s.* 8*d.* or 1*s.* 10*d.* Rack-Rent, even at this time, when the Land-Tax is fixed at 4*s.* in the Pound. Can any one call this a just Proportion? I forbear to point out these two Parishes by Name, because I would save some People of Note the Expence of blushing, if possible: The sole Aim of penning this Epistle being to set the misguided Part of the World right in this Particular, that they may be convinced we have attempted nothing but what is strictly justifiable; when this is done, my End is answered.

But if your L——p recollects one Circumstance, it must make you smile, That one of these two Parishes, which, at a Rack-Rent can raise its Proportion to the Land-Tax at 1*s.* 10*d.* in the Pound, is nevertheless 800*l.* in Debt; while the other, in full as good a Condition, has had its *Re-assessments*. Are not all these Collusions? Are they not mere juggling Tricks to deceive the oppressed Parishes, by persuading them

them that they are unable to assist them in taking a greater Quota upon them?

It was for some time pretended, that there was no Precedent for altering the Quota's upon the several Parishes, that they were the same as were assessed in the 3d and 4th of *William* and *Mary*, and that the altering them now was going contrary to the Directions of the Act. But unhappily for those Gentlemen, who broach'd this Doctrine, by searching the *Remembrancer's* Office, we found that the Quota's now assessed on each Parish were all (excepting two Parishes) more or less, different from what was assessed upon them in the 4th of *William* and *Mary*.

When they saw this Resource fail them, they were at their Wit's End. One threaten'd us with *Mandamus's*, *Informations*, &c. in the *King's-Bench*, while another pretended to dread giving Offence to the Legislature, and thereupon took occasion to descant upon *personal Courage*, and in what it consisted. It must, my L—d, appear a little odd to the World, that because one Set of Men, who have imposed for Years together heavier Burdens upon their Neighbours, than themselves have borne; now they are likely to bear an Equality, shall take upon them to bully, insult, threaten, and otherways to intimidate those

who, tired with the Yoke, were determined to shake it from them.

As it is natural for a drowning Man to catch at every Twig to save himself; so these imperious Gentlemen harp'd very much upon a Clause in *p.* 31. before recited, *viz.* ' by charging in proportion to the Sums ' which were assessed on the same Hundreds or Divisions by the Act 4th *William and Mary.*' And from thence would insinuate, that each Parish is to raise the same Sum it did in that Year. But, my L—d, the whole City and Liberty is but one Division, the Parishes are Subdivisions, and consequently not affected by that Clause. And as our Division, that is, the whole Liberty, raises the same Sum it did in the 4th of *William and Mary*, and we make no Attempt to alter it, that Clause is fully complied with.

If your L——p still doubts what I advance, and will insist that every Parish is a distinct Division, and not a Subdivision, I shall quote you a Line subsequent to the above. ' And shall also, if they see Cause, ' subdivide and distribute themselves into ' less Numbers.' Now is it not notorious, that at our annual General Meetings, we subdivide ourselves into our several Parishes, and when we are thus subdivided, can each Parish go under any other Denomination than that of a Subdivision?

I shall take the liberty to recite another Clause in this Act, *pag. 62, 63.* to illustrate the good Intentions of the Legislature, that the Land-Tax shall be raised with all the Equality possible.

‘ Provided always, That if any Person
 ‘ or Persons, who shall be charged or as-
 ‘ sessed by this Act to or with a Pound-
 ‘ Rate upon his, her, or their Manors,
 ‘ Lands, Tenements, Hereditaments, or
 ‘ other the Premises, shall upon Complaint
 ‘ made to the Commissioners, in such man-
 ‘ ner, and at such times, as are herein di-
 ‘ rected in Cases of Appeals, by Proof up-
 ‘ on Oath, that such Assessment doth ex-
 ‘ ceed the equal Pound-Rate, that ought to
 ‘ be charged on him, her, or them; in
 ‘ such case, upon every such Proof, the
 ‘ said Commissioners, or the major Part
 ‘ of them present, as aforesaid, are hereby
 ‘ empower’d to abate and lessen the said
 ‘ Assessments, so much as the same shall ex-
 ‘ ceed the equal Pound-Rate that *ought* to
 ‘ be charged on him, her, or them, and shall
 ‘ cause the Money so abated to be re-as-
 ‘ sessed, surcharged, and levied in such
 ‘ manner as they, *or the major Part of*
 ‘ *them*, in their Judgments and Discretions,
 ‘ shall judge most *equal, just and reason-*
 ‘ *able*, within the whole Hundred, Lathe,
 ‘ Wapentake, or other Division, where
 ‘ such Overcharges do happen, although

' the Pound-Rate of 4 s. in the Pound be
 ' thereby exceeded ; or if any particular
 ' Part or Parts of the same, or any Person
 ' therein, shall appear to them to be un-
 ' dercharged, then the Money so abated
 ' shall and may be raised upon such particu-
 ' lar Part or Persons so undercharged ; so that
 ' the whole Sum payable to his Majesty for
 ' such Hundred, Lathe, Wapentake, or o-
 ' ther Division, shall be fully and duly an-
 ' swered and paid, without being dimi-
 ' nished by reason of such particular Abate-
 ' ment.'

Can any one who duly considers this
 Clause, make any doubt that it was the In-
 tention of the Legislature, that each Sub-
 division throughout the whole Hundred or
 Division, shall pay according to equal Pro-
 portion, and that where the Pound-Rate
 appeared to be unequal, it was the Business
 of the Commissioners to regulate that
 Pound-Rate ?

The Commissioners for this Liberty found
 their Rates very unequal, and have alter'd
 them according to juster Proportions, I
 wish I could have given your L——p the
 Honour of it. But you know when the
 last Question was put for resettling the
 Quota's upon more equal Proportions,
 your L——p declared yourself the only
 Negative present.

The

The Question was indeed first put for continuing the old Quota's ; but when the Majority of Commissioners put a Negative upon that Question, as in justice they ought so to do ; the Minority thought proper to withdraw after a few warm Reflections, which the Disappointment they met with forced from them ; and your L——p was so complaisant to see all your old Friends march off, according to their Request, before you put the second Question for affixing new Quota's. Which thereupon was carried *Nemine Con.* except your L——p.

And now, because they withdrew before the second Question was put, they cunningly give out, that they are not tied down by the Proceedings of that Day, and I am told (how true it is I will not assert) that your L——p is so wise as to believe it. Nay, that they have put your Imagination upon the Rack, by telling you that you are liable to pay the Sum of 63,092 *l.* 1*s.* 5*d.* assessed upon the whole Division if you sign the Minutes of that Day's Proceedings. *Are these Things so ?* If they are, hide them for shame. You may indeed believe what they say ; but it is pretty evident they themselves know better.

How, in the name of Wonder, can you be saddled with the whole Sum ? Do you imagine, that the whole Liberty would come to a Resolution not to raise one
single

single Farthing, in order to fix all upon your L——p? A most ridiculous Supposition. At the worst, your L——p could but have made good the 7357 *l.* raised upon the two Parishes, who refused to accept of that additional Quota.

But can you, who have sat so many Years in P——t, be at a loss to know this, that in all public Corporations, Societies, Committees, &c. the Act of the Majority is the Act of the whole; and can we, who have done nothing more than Justice, be said to have acted illegally?

If, on the contrary, your Lordship's Friends had carried a Majority against us, we could have had no Redress but by Application to Parliament. We must have submitted to that Majority.

It has been said with a good deal of Spleen, that the Regulation of these Quota's was set on foot by *two Persons*, who had no Estates in the Liberty, and that they were back'd by others of as little Property; from whence they would infer, that a Qualification was necessary for Cities and Boroughs, as well as for Counties, in order to keep Men of no Property out of the Commission.

My L——d, what do these Reflections tend to prove? Why truly, that the Landed Commissioners are for the most part grown so mercenary, and have so little Regard to
Justice

Justice and common Honesty, as to stand in need of a Counter-balance of Commissioners, who have no Estate in Land to keep them honest.

For, my L—d, it cannot be denied, but that Persons of large Properties have greater Temptations to be partial in the Land-Tax, than those who have none. And the larger their Estates may be in that Division, where they act as Commissioners, in my humble Opinion, so much the more unfit are they to execute that Trust. Instead of a Qualification for Commissioners to act, it would be better to have this Regulation, *That no Person who has any Estate within the Division where he resides, shall have a Vote at the Board of Land-Tax.* This would prevent many Partialities in the levying of the Tax ; it would not then be worth any Gentleman's while, if he was influenced by no other Motive than to ease his own Estate in that Division, to covet getting into the Commission. But this only by the bye.

The Assertion, that none but Men of no Property engaged in this Regulation, your L——p knows to be false. You was an Eye-witness of several who bravely exerted themselves in this equitable Cause. I could point out some well know to your L——p, who had greater Properties in those two Parishes which they proposed to raise, than
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in the Parish where they resided. Nay, one in particular, who had no other Estate in the whole Liberty but in those two Parishes, which he zealously exerted himself to raise. So your L——p will perceive, that there are some Men of Virtue and Public Spirit amongst us, who prefer the Public Good to their own private Interest. But to return,

Did not the Landed Men in the Upper Liberties summon their Friends by circular Letters to attend at the General Meeting, signifying that their Properties and their All were at stake? Did not they come down in Numbers, preferring their Presence at the General Meeting of Commissioners, to that in St. St——n's Chapel? Did not they threaten such as voted against them, and demand a List of the *Pro's* and *Con's*, and by such an unprecedented Behavior, did not they intimidate several honest Men from voting as they intended, who rather chose to absent themselves than to incur their Displeasure?

But, my L——d, as I abhor a mean Servility, and ever shall while I have the Happiness to breathe in a Country, which boasts of her Freedom, I was determined to join my Brethren in stemming the Torrent of Arbitrary Power; for I can call it nothing less, when Threats were made use of, and we were told we should have a *public Mark* set upon us for doing no more than
our

our Duty, and which the Act itself repeatedly calls upon us to perform.

A good Name, my L—d, is better than Riches, which every honest Man will prize, more than all your L——p's Possessions. It is a pleasing Satisfaction to me and to the rest of my Fellow-Labourers, that we have done nothing but what is agreeable to the Principles of Justice and Equity, and what the very Act we were appointed to execute demanded of us.

Whether the Quota's were regulated or not, could not at all have affected me, and consequently I was far from being biased on one Side or the other.

But as *Virtue is* (said to be) *its own Reward*, the inward Pleasure I received in having contributed to carry this Point, is *inexpressible*.

It is, my L—d, a common Phrase with me, *that I am not born for myself alone*. A Phrase which was formerly better understood than at present. But, alas! in this degenerate Age, when the Leading Men of the N——n in Public, are observed to pay a greater Regard to Self-Interest, than to the Public Good; when we see them daily reversing the good old Proverb that used to influence our Ancestors, from *Honesty is the best Policy*, to *Policy is the best Honesty*: When we see this, my L—d, are we not in manifest Danger

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of

of the Contagion's spreading itself throughout the whole Land.

The People, my Lord, will always look above themselves, they will imitate their Superiors; and, according as they see their Behaviour, will they modify their own.

If the major Part of our Nobility and Gentry are Men of Virtue and Public Spirit, who prefer the public Weal before their own private Interest, the People will imitate their noble and virtuous Examples. If, on the other hand, our Nobility and Gentry are for the most part degenerated into Luxury, and Corruption the sure Attendant on Luxury, the People in process of time will be the same. They will learn the mercenary Temper of their Superiors, in giving *Self-Interest* the first Place in their Thoughts. For if the Fountain-Head be impure, the Streams flowing from it will be impure likewise.

Your L——p will observe, I treat only upon Generals.

To conclude: Whether your L——p signs the Minutes of the Proceedings of the Commissioners at their last General Meeting or not, is indifferent to me and to the rest of my Brethren. Your desisting from signing them cannot invalidate those Proceedings; they are still the same, and remain in as full Force. For the Act does not direct, that a Ch——n is to be chosen
at

at such General Meetings, who is to sign the Business of the Day; although it has been a Custom so to do, for the better facilitating the Execution of the Act, and for preventing Confusion, which might otherways happen for want of a Ch—n to call to order.

But your L—p is so sensible, that what was transacted at those General Meetings, was done by a fair Majority, (although not altogether pleasing to you) that you have given the Cl—k a power to sign those Minutes for you, and by so doing, have made yourself as accountable (had any thing illegal been done there) as though you had closed them with your own Hand.

In a word, *Self-Interest* is not my Guide. If therefore I could be persuaded that a Qualification was necessary for Cities, Boroughs, &c. that in order to remove *imaginary Evils*, such a Regulation would not create *real Ones*, no one should be more forward in promoting a Petition to Parliament for such a Qualification than myself. But so long as a mercenary, selfish Spirit bestrides this Kingdom, I fear, such a Regulation would create new Jealousies, Doubts and Fears, amongst his Majesty's Subjects, who might imagine that the *Great Ones* had made this Provision in order to *screen themselves*, and to throw the Burden of the Tax upon the Commonalty;

and whether these *Zealousies*, these *Doubts*, these *Fears*, when summed up, will not amount to *Dissatisfaction*, and whether that *Dissatisfaction*, if properly fomented by *French* Emissaries here, may not be kindled into *Disaffection*, I shall leave to your L—p, and your Friends to consider. Being with all Respect,

Your L——p's

Most Obedient,

Humble Servant,

A COMMISSIONER.

POST-

POSTSCRIPT.

AT our last General Meeting, I saw one or two Commissioners that were nominated for the County of *Middlesex* only (and not for the City and Liberty of *Westminster*) who continued and voted amongst us. One of them in particular was objected to as such; but the Person who made that Objection not having a Second to back him, the Challenge went off. However, as I think it highly improper to have the County-Men yearly poured in upon us, which will infallibly be attended with very bad Consequences, I think it not amiss to make that Objection here, where the Right may be more amply discussed than at a General Meeting, that the rest of my Brethren may have time to consider it against next Year; and make no doubt, but they will be so fully convinced of the Unreasonableness of the County Commissioners having a Vote amongst us, that whoever is found so disqualified at any future General-Meeting, may have the Law put in force against him. For the Constitutions of the County and Division are quite different. The former requires every Commissioner to be *seiz'd*
and

and possessed of Lands, Tenements, or Hereditaments, which were taxed, or did pay in the same County or Riding, for the Value of One Hundred Pounds per Annum or more, of his own Estate: Whereas the latter is, p. 65. ' That no Person, who is ' hereby appointed to be a Commissioner ' for executing this Act in any Part of Eng- ' land, Wales, or Berwick upon Tweed, ' shall be disabled from acting as a Com- ' missioner within any City, Borough, ' Cinque Port, or Corporate Town only, ' for which he is particularly nominated ' and appointed a Commissioner, and ' whereof he shall be an Inhabitant at the ' Time of the Execution of this Act.' How then can any Gentleman, who is not particularly nominated and appointed a Commissioner for the City and Liberty of Westminster, and who is not an Inhabitant or Resident within that City and Liberty at the Time of his Voting, pretend to have a Vote at our General Meetings? The Answer has been, because p. 63. enacts, That Commissioners for the County at large may act for any City, &c. It does so; but observe the Manner *how*, and Time *when*, the County Commissioners have that Liberty given them. The Clause at large runs as follows. ' Provided nevertheless, ' that in case *there shall not be a sufficient* ' Number of Commissioners for any City, ' Borough,

‘ Borough, Cinque Port, Town, or Place
 ‘ in *England, Wales, or Berwick upon*
 ‘ *Tweed* (for which by this Act Commis-
 sioners are particularly appointed) capable
 of acting according to the Qualifications
 required by this Act, for putting this Act
 ‘ in Execution ; *that in every such Case,*
 ‘ any of the said Commissioners appointed
 ‘ for the County at large, within which
 ‘ such City, Borough, Town, Cinque Port,
 ‘ or Place doth stand, or which is next ad-
 ‘ joining thereto, *may act* as Commis-
 sioners in the Execution of this Act, within
 ‘ such City, Borough, Town, Cinque Port,
 ‘ or Place.

Another Clause, p. 31. they also quote
 to support the Freedom they have taken of
 coming amongst us, but which was not in-
 serted for their purpose, but for such Com-
 missioners who should be qualified and no-
 minated for the County at large, that their
 being nominated and acting for any parti-
 cular Division, such as is the Liberty of *West-*
minster, should not disqualify them from
 acting for the County.

The Clause (after reciting that the Com-
 missioners for every Hundred and Division
 may subdivide themselves into less Num-
 bers, &c.) ends thus ; ‘ Nevertheless not
 ‘ thereby to restrain the said Commissioners,
 ‘ or any of them, from acting as Commis-
 sioners in any other Part of the County
 ‘ or

‘ or Place *for which they are appointed.*
Whereby it is plain, that there is a previous
Stipulation, namely, that the Commissioners
for the Liberty must be *appointed* by the
Act Commissioners for the County, before
they can act in the County at large; and
also that the Commissioners for the County
must be *appointed*, that is, *nominated* in the
Act Commissioners for the *Westminster*
Division, before they can Act in that Di-
vision.

Nay, nor have the latter a power to act
even then, unless they *are Inhabitants at
the Time of the Execution of this Act*,
except it be in a Case of *Necessity*, where a
sufficient Number of Commissioners shall
be wanting to put the Act in Execution.
But as these Gentlemen can have no such
Plea to come to our General Meetings,
where between two and three hundred
Commissioners usually assemble, our Right
to exclude the County-Gentlemen who are
not *Inhabitants* within the Liberty is un-
questionable; and therefore, it is hoped,
for the Peace of this City and Liberty, that
they will never more attempt to meet us.



F I N I S.

